United Nations A/63/475

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 October 2008

Original: English

Sixty-third session
Agenda item 8
General debate

Letter dated 3 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to enclose herewith the text of the written statement of the delegation of the United Kingdom in exercise of the right of reply to the remarks made by His Excellency Mr. Somduth Soborun, chairperson of the delegation of Mauritius, on 29 September 2008 in the General Assembly (see annex).

I should be most grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 8.

(*Signed*) John **Sawers**

08-54536 (E) 141008

Annex to the letter dated 3 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Statement of the delegation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in exercise of the right of reply to the remarks made by the Prime Minister of Mauritius in the general debate on 29 September 2008

The British Government maintains that the British Indian Ocean Territory is British and has been since 1814. It does not recognize the sovereignty claim of the Mauritian Government.

However, the British Government has recognized Mauritius as the only State which has a right to assert a claim of sovereignty when the United Kingdom relinquishes its own sovereignty.

Successive British Governments have given undertakings to the Government of Mauritius that the Territory will be ceded when no longer required for defence purposes.

The British Government remains open to discussions regarding arrangements governing the British Indian Ocean Territory or the future of the Territory. The British Government has stated that when the time comes for the Territory to be ceded it will liaise closely with the Government of Mauritius.

The British Government values its close and constructive cooperation with the Government of Mauritius on a wide range of issues and looks forward to this continuing.